

Child Welfare Act of 1980, Congress recognized the need to align Federal incentives with the desired goal of providing abused and neglected children safe, permanent homes. Nearly half a million children make up our nation's foster care population, with more than one in four of these vulnerable children living with a grandparent or other relative. Unfortunately, federal financial assistance currently is available only to foster and adoptive families, with only a few states receiving a waiver to provide subsidized guardianship. However, adoption is not a viable option for many children to exit foster care. For example, courts explicitly rule out this permanency option for approximately 20,000 children in relative care each year. Moreover, adoption is not equally availed by families of all races and ethnicities, especially those in African-American and Native-American communities. Thus, subsidized guardianship is an important path to permanency for many abused and neglected children.

The current Federal guidelines also create financial disincentives to guardianship. Almost 19% of kinship care providers live in poverty, and 30% to 40% of children in foster care have chronic medical problems. Subsidized guardianship, like the federal adoption assistance program, provides needed support to these kinship caregivers to afford appropriate care for these vulnerable children. Terminating support to families once guardianship is established presents overwhelming hardships for these children and families that discourage them from leaving foster care. The limited federal support for guardianship is a critical roadblock to permanency for thousands of children, resulting in their remaining in the foster care longer than necessary and possibly aging out of the system without a legal family of their own.

With 10 years of experience under our belts, Illinois shows that subsidized guardianship works. Unfortunately, the subsidized guardianship waiver program expired in 2006. This means that no new states can benefit from the program, and, when the existing waivers for 15 states—including 10 Illinois—expire in the next few years, our children and thousands of children others will be denied this vital permanency option if new subsidized guardianship legislation is not passed.

So, the Kinship Caregiver Support Act allows states the option to provide guardianship assistance to relatives without a waiver. It also implements additional supports for kinship caregivers, such as establishing informational navigator programs to assist grandparents and relatives in accessing appropriate services and supports. Further, it allows states to establish separate licensing standards for relative foster parents and non-relative foster parents and requires state agencies to provide prompt notice to all adult relatives when children are removed from parental custody. The bill also extends innovative Illinois programs to the national level. For example, it expands eligibility for the Foster Care Independence Program so that education and training vouchers as well as independent living services are available to young people who exit foster care after age 14 to guardianship or adoption. It includes as eligible children who live in relative homes determined by the courts and State agency as meeting all applicable State safety standards other than licensure as well.

Subsidized guardianship is a bipartisan issue. Indeed, our bill is a companion bill to

that introduced in the other chamber by Senators HILLARY CLINTON and OLYMPIA SNOWE. Further, as you may recall, the reconciliation bill from the Republican-controlled 109th Congress would have extended authority for these waivers and removed the limit on the number of states eligible, providing further testament to the bipartisan nature of this issue.

As Forest Witcraft said, "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove, but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child. . . ." As policy makers, we have the ability and responsibility to make a difference in the lives of foster children. We must use that ability to make sure the downtrodden and neglected of today are the achievers and leaders of tomorrow. I encourage my colleagues to join me and Representative JOHNSON in supporting this critical bill.

ARTISTIC DISCOVERY COMPETITION

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 10, 2007

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the winner of this year's California's 32nd Congressional District Congressional "Artistic Discovery" competition and the contribution of all the people that made this event possible. As a Member of Congress, I am proud to support the artistic talent of our local youth by being part of "An Artistic Discovery."

This year students from 16 high schools in California's 32nd Congressional District submitted 186 pieces of work for Artistic Discovery. The winner of the competition was Jose Curiel from Arroyo High School, a resident of El Monte, California, for his piece titled "All Alone." Jose will be invited to Washington, DC, for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, and will have his artwork displayed in the Cannon Tunnel for 1 year. I am proud of Jose, all the runners up and honorable mentions, and all the youth who participated for sharing their talent with the community.

I would also like to thank the 2007 Artistic Discovery Committee for their support for the arts, for their dedication to California's 32nd Congressional District and their young talent, and for a successful "Artistic Discovery" competition. This event could not have been possible without the time and support of the 2007 Artistic Discovery Committee. This year's committee has truly set a standard with their hard work. I would like to recognize and thank this year's committee:

Denise Tornatore from the Baldwin Park Adult and Community Education School, who served as the Chair of the Committee; Carol Facciponti from Carousel Reality; Pascual Garrido from SCE Federal Credit Union; Irene Portillo from Project Amiga; Billy Rugh from Creative Planet School of the Arts; Michael Carney from AT&T; Elizabeth Bagwell from City of Hope; Kristen Pugh from City of Hope; Marianna Lake from the Valley County Water District; Dr. Ramon Zavala from Baldwin Park Unified; Marissa Castro from Southern California Edison; Helen Romero Shaw from the Gas Company; Nadia Andrade from UPS;

Shirley Batman from Bank of America; Michelle Bart from Helping Heroes Productions; Kevin McDonald from Foothill Transit; and, Debbie Guerra from AT&T Pioneers.

Just as important as the committee's dedication to California's 32nd District's "An Artistic Discovery" competition is the dedication of all the teachers of the participating schools. All our teachers deserve a big thank you for recognizing and supporting the talented students that participated in this event and encouraging them to submit their artwork. I thank all of our teachers for the work and generosity they give each and every day in the classroom. These submitted pieces of artwork are a testament to the energy, enthusiasm, encouragement and support that our teachers are providing.

The artwork that was submitted to California's 32nd District's artistic competition was awe-inspiring. I commend all the students who participated for using their talents in such a positive way and sharing those talents with others. I look forward to next year's "An Artistic Discovery" art competition and encourage all the supporters to continue with their good work.

TRIBUTE TO MR. BILL HARDISTY

HON. KAY GRANGER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 10, 2007

Ms. GRANGER. Madam Speaker, we often hear so much about what is wrong with America. I'd like to focus on what is right. And today throughout America, there are great teachers making a great difference in the lives of their students. As I often say, many people spend their lives building careers but teachers spend their careers building lives.

And few have done it better or longer than Mr. Bill Hardisty, the principal of Cassata High School in Fort Worth, Texas.

This year, Mr. Hardisty concludes a 37-year career in education. For two and a half decades, he served in the Fort Worth Independent School District as a coach, teacher and assistant principal. And for the past 11 years, he has served at Cassata. He started as associate director and in 2002, he was named principal.

Hardisty's service extends beyond our children's education. Before he taught in our schools, he defended our country. A marine who later served in the Army Reserve, Mr. Hardisty was the very embodiment of the noble Marine Corps motto: Semper Paratus. He was always faithful.

But it is his work as an educator that has touched the lives of so many future leaders. One of his students later served on my staff. Here is what he told me about Hardisty: "He taught with his heart. He knew that kids don't care what you know until they know that you care. Mr. Hardisty cared. And so his students listened and learned from him."

This is what teachers do: they shape minds and change lives. It was Yeats who wrote that education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire. Thanks to Mr. Hardisty, countless people are today living lives fueled by a flame lit long ago in his classroom.

Cassata High School will miss Mr. Hardisty. But it will never forget him. His leadership and his legacy will live on in the many students whose lives he touched.